

TESTIMONY OF ADVENTIST HEALTHCARE

In Support of Council Bill 25-08

Emergency Medical Services Transport Fee

July 8, 2008

Good evening. My name is Robert Jepson and I serve as Associate Vice President of Government Relations & Public Policy with Adventist HealthCare. Adventist HealthCare operates hospitals, nursing centers, home health services, health and wellness programs and many other services throughout Montgomery County and the State of Maryland.

We are here this evening to support *Bill 25-08, the Emergency Medical Services Transport Fee*. We understand this issue has engendered a fair amount of discussion and we are sensitive and respectful to those who have concerns about the ambulance transport fee. We believe these issues can and will be addressed.

Montgomery County should be proud of its highly regarded Fire and Rescue Services Department. It is the envy of many other jurisdictions. It's important to keep these critical, life saving services strong and accessible for all residents now and in the future.

Adventist HealthCare believes this legislation is in the overall best interests of the County for the following reasons:

1. Important to Keep Lifesaving Services Strong and Accessible.

The varied services provided by Montgomery County Fire & Rescue are among the most important core services provided by the county. These services literally save lives every day. It's essential to keep these services strong and easily accessible for all, especially at a time of tightening county budget constraints, increasing demand for fire/rescue services and continued population growth.

2. Funding Source is Ready and Waiting.

Public and private insurers, including Medicare and Medicaid, already have a fee schedule for ambulance services and are used to paying these claims. Montgomery County is one of the few jurisdictions in the region that does not bill insurers for these services, and this is standard operating procedure in communities across the United States. This is a ready and waiting funding source for the County's Fire and Rescue Services, and the County would be remiss to not claim reimbursement from insurers for a service already approved for payment.

Our mission is to deliver excellent healthcare through a ministry of physical, mental and spiritual healing.

Washington Adventist Hospital • Hackettstown Regional Medical Center • Adventist Home Care Services
Shady Grove Adventist Hospital • Greater Washington Sleep Disorders Centers
Adventist Senior Living Services • Potomac Ridge Behavioral Health System
Adventist Rehabilitation Hospital of Maryland

3. Montgomery County Residents Will Not Be Charged Out of Pocket.

We support the plan to not charge a co-pay and not to balance bill county residents for ambulance services. Fire/Rescue has indicated it will accept insurance reimbursement as payment in full, and that it will not bill uninsured County residents. We believe this is the right approach and support this process.

4. Public Outreach Campaign

We believe it is vital to initiate a public, comprehensive, multi-lingual outreach campaign about the ambulance fee prior to initiating this program. If this legislation passes, it will be critical for all county residents to understand that this would not affect services or cost county residents a co-pay or fee, but rather would enhance the ability of our First Responders to maintain a high standard of quality service. Ensuring residents are not shy about calling 911 when in need is of paramount importance. The Adventist HealthCare Center on Health Disparities is committed to working with the Council, the Health & Human Services Department and our community partners in such an effort.

Thank you very much for your consideration of our support for this initiative. We'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.